

By MARK TWAIN.

CHAPTER XXIV. (Continued.)

Sally had also a chance to do another thing.

That was to make up her mind that life was

not worth living upon the present terms. She

must give up her impostor and die, doubtless

her whole case must be submitted; but might she not

have some saving way out of the matter? She

first tried with Hawkins after her parents were

gone the talk told on Tracy, and she was im-

pelled to set her case before the statesman

and take his counsel. So she poured out her

heart, and he listened with patient solicitude.

She concluded pleadingly with:

"Don't tell me it's an impostor, I suppose

you are, but don't tell me to you as if I'm not?

You are cool, you know, and outside, and so

maybe it can look to you as if he isn't one,

when it can't be. Do you think it looks to you

as if he isn't? Could you tell me to look to you

as if he is?—for my sake?"

The poor man was troubled, but he felt

obliged to keep in the neighborhood of the

truth. He fought around the present detail a

little while, then gave it up and said he couldn't

really say his way was better than Tracy's.

"So," he said, "the truth is he's an im-

postor."

"That is, you—fellow little certain, but

not entirely—no, not entirely, Mr. Hawkins."

"It's a pity to have to say it—I do hate to say

it—but I don't think anything about it, I know

he's an impostor."

"Oh, now, Mr. Hawkins, you can't go that

far. A body can't really know it, you know.

It isn't proved he's not what he says he is."

Should he come out and make a clean breast

of the whole wretched business, I mean, at least

the most of it—ought he to do so, he says?

"He should, and he should, and he should,"

he said, "and he should, and he should, and

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off, and of course estimates of such things

vary with temperament. With an outcast

they would not necessarily attract as much at-

tention as with you, yet they are often re-

garded with disapproval."

"Murder and arson are regarded with dis-

approval."

"Oh, frequently."

"With disapproval! Who are those par-

tians you are talking about? But wait—how

do you know so much about this family? Where

did you get all this hearsay evidence?"

"Sally, it isn't hearsay. That is the serious

part of it. I know that family personally."

This was a surprise.

"You? You actually know them?"

"Knew Zylis, as we used to call him, and

knew his father, Dr. Snodgrass. I didn't know

your own Snodgrass, but have had glimpses

of him from time to time, and I heard about

him all the time. He was the common talk,

you see, on account of his—"

"On account of his not being a houseburner

or an assassin, I suppose. That would have

made him commonplace. Where did you know

him?"

"In Cherokee Strip."

"Oh, how preposterous! There are not

enough people in Cherokee Strip to give any-

body a reputation, good or bad. There isn't

a quorum. Why the whole population consists

of a few wagon loads of horse thieves."

Hawkins smiled grimly.

"Our friend was one of those wagon loads."

Sally's eyes burned and her breath came

quickly and fast, but she kept a fairly good

grip on her anger and did not let it get the ad-

vantage of her tongue. The statesman sat still

and waited for her to get on her feet. He

waited with his work. It was as handsome

a piece of diplomatic art as he had ever turned

out; and now, let the girl make

her own choice. He judged she would let her

spectacles go; he hadn't a doubt of it; but any-

way, let the choice be made, and he was ready

to ratify it and offer no further hindrance.

Meanwhile Sally had thought and made up

her mind. To the Major's disappointment the

verdict was against him. Sally said:

"He has no friend but me, and I will not de-

sert myself in his behalf. He is a man of im-

moral character in fact; but if he can prove

that it isn't I will—and he shall have the

chance. To me he seems utterly good and

dear; I have never seen anything about him

that looked otherwise—except, of course, his

only fault, and that is, he is a man who is

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is only a man, and no more. He is a man who

but changed his mind and decided to walk

down town, and so glided swiftly away."

"And isn't your name Spinal Meningitis,

and isn't your father a doctor and an

idiot, like all the family for generations, and

doesn't he name all his children after poli-

sons and rheumatism and abnormal anatomical

eccentricities of the human body? Answer

me, some way or somehow—and quick. Why

do you sit there, looking like an envelope with-

out any address on it, and see me going mad

before your face with suspense?"

"I wish I could tell you, but I wish I could

do something—anything that would give you

peace again and make you happy; but I know

of nothing—I know of no way. I never heard

of that? Say it again."

"I have never seen in my life till now."

"Oh, you do look so honest when you say

that! It must be true; surely you couldn't

look that way, you wouldn't look that way if

it were not true, would you?"

"I couldn't and wouldn't. It is true, Oh, let

us discuss this suffering. Take me back into

your heart and confidence."

"Wait—more than that. Tell me you told

that falsehood out of mere vanity and are

sorry for it; that you are not expecting to ever

wear the coronet of an earl?"

"I will confess to you an outline of my idea.

It is to utilize the spots on the sun; get con-

trol of them, you understand, and apply the

stupendous energies which they yield to

beneficent purposes in the reorganizing of

our climates. At present they merely make

the earth a hot-house, and other kinds of ex-

cesses, and other kinds of excesses, and other

human and intelligent control this will

cease and they will become a boon to man."

"I have my plan all mapped out, whereby I

hope and expect to acquire complete and

perfect control of the sun spots, also details

of the whole scheme, and I shall be ready to

commence commercially; but I will not venture

to go into particulars before the patents have

been issued. I shall hope and expect to

sell ship rights to the minor countries at a

reasonable figure, and supply a good busi-

ness for the rest of the world. The patents

at special rates, together with fancy brands

for coronations, battles, and other great and

particular occasions. There are billions of

money in this enterprise, no expensive plant

is required, and I shall begin to realize in a

few days. I will not venture to say that I

stand ready to pay cash for Spinal Menin-

gitis, but I am confident of it."

"I would like you to provide a proper outfit

and start north as soon as I can, you be-

lieve me, it is day. I wish you to take up all

the country, and I wish you to take up all

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